

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7149

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 2719

THE FOLLOWING TELEGRAM SENT ACTION NEW DELHI ON FEB 26,1975
FROM CALCUTTA IS REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO.

QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CALCUTTA 0495

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, PFOR, IN, US

SUBJECT: HARCOS/FLETCHER: JANABANI ARTICLE

1. HERewith THE FULL TEXT OF THE FEBRUARY 8, FRONT PAGE STORY IN
JANABANI (WEEKLY, BENGALI-LANGUAGE, CIRC. 5,000) ENTITLED
"MYSTERIOUS ENTHUSIASM AMONG THE MARXIST COMMUNISTS REGARDING
THE TWO AMERICAN DIVERS. TST: QUOTE THE INTEREST DISPLAYED BY
THE LEADERS ON THE WEST BENGAL CPI(M) IN THE TWO AMERICAN
DIVERS WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AS SPIES IS MYSTIFYING.

"THE CASE OF THE TWO AMERICAN DIVERS WHO WERE ARRESTED AT CALCUTTA
PORT IS STILL CONTINUING. THE CASE IS BEING TRIED AT THE CITY
SESSIONS COURT IN CAMERA.

"THE BARRISTER WHO IS APPEARING FOR THESE TWO AMERICANS ACCUSED
OF ESPIONAGE IS JYOTI BASU'S NEPHEW, AMAL DUTTA.

"IN THE LAST ELECTIONS, MR. DUTTA WAS THE CPI(M) NOMINEE FOR THE
BIDHAN SABHA FROM THE CHOWRINGHEE CONSTITUENCY.

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"THE CASE HAS BEEN DRAGGING ON FOR NEARLY A YEAR AND A HALF. IT HAS CAUSED A DIPLOMATIC STIR BETWEEN CALCUTTA, NEW DELHI AND WASHINGTON.

"IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE U.S. CONSUL GENERAL IN CALCUTTA, L.G. PICKERING, TRIED TO INFLUENCE THE JUDGE IN CHARGE OF THE CASE. THIS DISPLEASED THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND THEY VOICED THEIR OBJECTION TO IT. THIS IS PROBABLY THE REASON WHY MR. PICKERING HAD TO LEAVE CALCUTTA SO SUDDENLY.

"A WOMAN SOLICITOR FROM THE UNITED STATES IS HERE TO DEFEND THE TWO ACCUSED. SHE IS STAYING IN A HOTEL OPPOSITE THE AMERICAN CONSULATE. IT IS HEARD THAT THE BARRISTER, AMAL DEGU, HAS VISITED SEVERAL PLACES IN CALCUTTA IN THE COMPANY OF THIS LADY. THEY HAVE MET JYOTI BABU MANY TIMES. THE LADY HAS NOT ONLY MET JYOTI BABU, SHE HAS ALSO CALLED HIM FROM THE AMERICAN CONSULATE. AT THAT TIME JYOTI BABU WAS NOT AT HOME BUT IN ANOTHER PLACE AND THE LADY, INSTEAD OF CALLING HIM FROM HER HOTEL, CONTACTED HIM OVER THE PHONE FROM THE CONSULATE.

"IN SPITE OF BEING ACCUSED OF ESPIONAGE, THE TWO DIVERS ARE NOT IN JAIL, BUT ARE KEPT IN CUSTODY IN A LUXURIOUS FLAT.

"THE OFFICERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT UNDER ORDERS FROM DELHI, ARE KEEPING A CLOSE WATCH ON THE CPI(M) LEADERS TO FIND OUT WHAT IS THE MYSTERY BEHIND THEIR 'GREAT ENTHUSIASM' OVER THE CASE OF THE TWO DIVERS. UNQUOTE.

2. COMMENT: JANABANI IS A PUBLICATION SUPPORTED BY SOME LEADERS OF THE WEST BENGAL CONGRESS(O). WE HAD ANTICIPATED SOME CPI-CPI(M) MUD-SLINGING IN REGARD TO DEFENSE COUNSEL DUTTA'S ROLE, BUT THIS ONE COMES AS SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE. DUTTA, WE UNDERSTAND, WAS AT FIRST UPSET BY THE ARTICLE AND WAS THINKING IN TERMS OF FILING A CASE AGAINST THE NEWSPAPER SINCE THE SUBJUDICE NATURE OF THE CASE PRECLUDES ANY PRESS COMMENT ON IT, BUT SINCE THAT TIME HE HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED NOT TO TAKE ANY ACTION. ROSSELET UNQUOTE SCHNEIDER

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*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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